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Experts Ridicule Hill 'Bug' Story

By JULIAN MORRISON

A professional wiretapper's claim yesterday that someone — possibly the Justice Department, possibly not — may have bugged all of Capitol Hill from an unnamed "old building here, are widely discounted here.

The wiretapper, Bernard B. Sindel, of Holmes, N.Y., refused to name the source of his information, as he testified before a Massachusetts commission investigating eavesdropping. Mr. Spindel said that one of the tenants in the "old building" was "a Justice Department Agency which he did not name."

NO NAMES

He said his unnamed "source" told him a branch line led into the building from the main Capitol Hill phone cable and that he was also told that "many Government officials" were working at the terminal box of the line.

"Maybe it was the CIA. Maybe it was the FBI. Maybe some other organization was listening in," he said.

The story wasn't new.

It was learned yesterday that Boston Herald reporter Ron Kessler, who has been assigned to write stories on electronic eavesdropping, had picked up rumors that Hill offices were being tapped from the old Esso Building at third and Constitution-av nw, and had tried to inspect some of the rooms in it.

When he was refused permission by the superintendent who manages the

building for the District Government pending its demolition for a highway tunnel, he wrote Commissioner Walter N. Tobriner.

Mr. Tobriner said yesterday he got a letter from the reporter, written on Aug. 18, outlining the "bugging" stories he'd heard and asking permission to bring along an unidentified electronics expert to make an inspection.

Mr. Tobriner replied on Aug. 23, granting the permission. But yesterday, District Government officials assigned to take Mr. Kessler thru the premises said he never showed up.

On Capitol Hill, a Senate official said it had been known for some time that a branch line from the Capitol led into the Esso Building but said he doubted it had been used for monitoring congressional phone conversations.

On the other side of the Hill, a House official said he'd also heard the rumor about a phone tap in the Esso building but, as far as he was concerned, it was simply a rumor.

A spokesman for the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Co. knocked the whole thing down as "ridiculous".

And Rep. Cornelius Gallagher (D., N.J.) said he "can't believe" any Government agency would eavesdrop on a bunch of Congressmen, but added that if Mr. Spindel and his unnamed "source" can come up with some proof, he'll demand a Congressional hearing.